



State of Connecticut
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MEDIA ADVISORY



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES WINTER CARBON MONOXIDE ALERT

HARTFORD – Earlier this week, three family members died and three more remain hospitalized after being poisoned by carbon monoxide gas from a clogged chimney flue in their East Lyme home. “This terrible tragedy has unfortunately happened before in our state,” said Department of Public Health Commissioner John Galvin, MD. “Sadly, it might have been prevented if there was a carbon monoxide detector in the house to warn the people to get out once levels got too high.”

“The tricky thing about carbon monoxide poisoning, is that early symptoms may feel like the flu, common headache, or a number of other things,” said Dr. Galvin. “This may make the diagnosis difficult.” Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless. It is produced any time fuel is burned. Sources in a home can include gas, oil, propane, kerosene, and wood fed appliances like stoves, water heaters, washers and dryers, and heating units like furnaces, fireplaces, and portable space heaters. Running automobiles, snow blowers, lawn mowers and leaf blowers in garages can also introduce carbon monoxide into the house. These activities should be avoided.

The Department of Public Health teaches the public that there are some simple things that we all can do to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

- 1. INSTALL A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR ON EACH FLOOR OF YOUR HOME - IF THE ALARM GOES OFF, GET OUT AND CALL THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.**
- 2. CHECK FURNACE AND CHIMNEY EVERY YEAR TO MAKE SURE THERE IS ADEQUATE VENTING AND PROPER CLEANING.**
- 3. KNOW THE SYMPTOMS- DO YOU FEEL WORSE WHEN AT HOME, AND BETTER WHEN AWAY FROM HOME? HAVE A NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS COME DOWN WITH SOME OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS IN A SHORT TIME PERIOD?**

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE: HEADACHE, FLU –LIKE FEELING, DROWSINESS, CONFUSION, NAUSEA, FAINTING UPON MILD EXERTION

Remember, the winter season is only half over. Be careful during winter power outages not to use fuel space heaters inside with the windows closed. Do not use gas ovens for heat with windows closed. Never use generators and/or gas grills in garages, basements, or inside of the house. Carbon monoxide can build up and poison you!

For more information about carbon monoxide poisoning and carbon monoxide detectors, call the DPH Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health Division at (860) 509-7742. If you think you are being

poisoned, call your local fire department, the Connecticut Poison Control Center at 800-343-2722 or your physician after you have left the area where the carbon monoxide is present.